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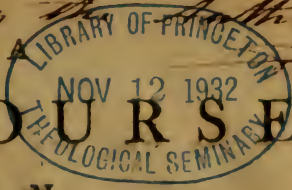
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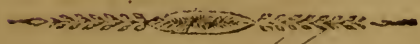
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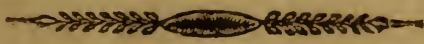
SINGING LECTURE,

IN

NORTH BOLTON.



By Ichabod L. Skinner, A. B.



HARTFORD:
PRINTED BY HUDSON AND GOODWIN.

DISCOVER

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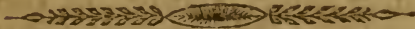
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A DISCOURSE ON MUSIC.



PSALM C. 4.

Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise.

THE import of the language in the text, may be drawn from the sacred sense of praise in the scriptures—the expression of divine praise. These words are taken from a psalm, composed, probably, after the release from the Babalonish captivity, at the building and dedication of the temple; and tho' not written by David, yet they breathe the same spirit of piety and praise. The language of sacred song, is expressed in pure and humble, yet elevated raptures, of men who felt the most intimate sense of the omnipresence and glory of God. We might understand by praise, all the various occasions, on which our souls are awakened to exult in a sense of the character, works, and goodness of God. Or we may with propriety confine it to the musical expression of our religious feelings and sentiments, and thus the text is fairly applicable to the present occasion.

A very important part of the Jewish worship was music—probably on opening the Temple, the King and Priests, and all the people, entered with music, which like the other parts of temple worship, was calculated to solemnize the mind, and to prepare it for the ceremony and emblematic glory of typical service,

Music was not only peculiarly suited to that dispensation, but also, it was agreeable to the state of eastern literature at that time.

From the nature of man, we should naturally suppose that some of the first attempts to literature and refinement, would be poetry and music. These seem to be inseparably connected. The spirit of music, would naturally prompt to poetry and metrical composition; and again, improvements in poetry would as naturally inspire music and song—They would mutually react upon each other to inspiration and improvement. History confirms these ideas—Homer mixes the song with the history of contending Gods, of heroes gaining immortal renown, and of conquering lovers. Orpheus, with his harp, is said to have made the trees dance, and rivers to stop in their courses—and Amphion is said to have given power to the stones, so that they should rise into regular walls and edifices—in this manner he is fabled to have builded the city of Thebes—The history of poetry and music may doubtless be traced to the same origin. In the rude and barbarous state of nations, just rising into some degree of literary improvement, we should expect that these sciences would make considerable figure—we find this to be the case; and perhaps music and poetry have been most highly esteemed, among those nations, who have not very far advanced in refinement. These sciences have been esteemed, however; not only among rude nations, just beginning to improve, but every succeeding step in the progress of improvement, has generally, been strongly marked with coincident traces of progress, in the refinements of poetry and music. The musician and the bard were

highly respected, among the ancients. It was the office of the latter to record great events, and to immortalize the character, and fate of heroes, and to compose for the worship of the Gods. It was the office of the former, to soothe the rough passions of uncivilized men, to call wandering tribes to settled habitations, to aid them to the arts of social life, and to the security of fenced cities, and to inspire them to the worship of the Gods. In a word, to illustrate these remarks—Music and poetry are languages of nature. The first state of language must have been rude, and imperfect; with few words and many objects, men would naturally fall into what is now called the eastern stile—a stile of poetical structure, and which would be read with a musical tone. At first music and poetry were united, afterwards, they were considered, and cultivated as separate arts, but they never can be wholly independent. Antiently, the bard and the musician were united in one man, and even now, the great poet must have some taste for music, and the great musician, must have some knowledge of poetry.

In no age, has music been wholly neglected, but it has shared the fate of the other sciences, to rise and fall with the changes of custom, improvement, or barbarism, in different ages and nations. It was joined universally with Pagan worship, and in all the christian countries, it has been esteemed a part of divine service. The Italians have for many years excelled, and perhaps still excel all other nations in music.—The Germans also have carried it to a great degree of perfection.—The former are most highly favored by nature and climate, but the latter have nearly equalled the former, by industry and application. The French from their national character have less excelled in the sublime and devotional, while on the other hand, the English, possessed of a phlegmatic temper, have comparatively left the cheerful and delicate for the courser and more languid strains of melancholy. America should be mentioned with respect, for her improvement

in all the fine arts. And tho' we cannot in some respects rival the Europeans, we may with pleasure observe the progress, which is making in every profitable and humanizing art.

After men had acquired some knowledge of the powers of the human voice, we may suppose the invention of instruments. So early as the time of David, we have an account of a great variety of musical instruments. These together with a multitude of voices composed the sacred choirs of the Temple, and formed a principal part of divine service—There were also in the time of Solomon, singing men, and singing women, and various kinds of piping, harping and sounding instruments—See 2 Chron. v. 13, in the account, of Solomon's dedication of the Temple—Also the Levites which were singers, all of them of Afaph, Heman and Jeduthun with their sons and their brethren, being arrayed in white linen, having cymbals and psalteries, and harps, stood at the east end of the altar, and with them an hundred and twenty priests sounding with trumpets; and it came to pass, as the trumpeters and singers, were as one, to make one sound, to be heard in praising the Lord, and when they lifted up their voice with the trumpets and cymbals and instruments of music, and praised the Lord, saying for he is good, for his mercy endureth forever, that then the house was filled with the cloud, even the house of the Lord. This is a very solemn instance of divine worship. The number of those who were instructed in songs of the Lord, as mentioned in the time of David, was two hundred, four score and eight. And probably in Solomon's time it was much greater. These instances, show the state of music, in some of the earliest times of history, and confirm the observations, which we have previously made.

Of all instruments, the organ stands first, whether we consider the greatness of the invention, or the union of softness, sublimity and variety of sounds.—

The first hearing of this instrument is more peculiarly affecting. It may however, on the whole, perhaps be exceeded by a band of instruments ; but it is said that their best organs in some of the eastern churches, united with the sublimity of Gothic architecture, can inspire the most awful and pathetic emotions. After all, instruments can never equal the human voice ; the voice must always be more various, more manageable, and more significant than any single instrument. There is the same difference between the voice and an instrument, which there is between a living man and his statue ; but this affords no argument against the use of instruments, any more, than that men actually live, affords an argument against statuary and painting. The most perfect music is a due mixture of vocal and instrumental. In a happy concert of vocal and instrumental music, while the instruments regulate and enliven the voice, in return, the voice softens the instruments, and gives them significance. They both conspire to heighten the expression, the music is more extensive and commanding, and the whole accumulated effect is proportionably greater on the mind.

2. Music has been called the language of the passions. This is not only a truth ; but a truth which is very extensive. When the author of nature had finished his terrestrial works, to crown the whole man was created, with the distinguishing faculties of reason, language, and music. These three establish his prerogative of dominion over the inferior creatures, and render him capable of the numerous improvements of social and religious life. / Reason directs us in life and manners—language aids us in the expression of our ideas in social intercourse—and music is the expression of the passions, in the rational exercise of human sensibility. / As we can express our thoughts by words, so we can express our feelings by music ; / and there is in nature, an air of music corresponding to the several affections of the mind—/

The design of every piece of music therefore, either indicates what is the present state of the mind, or what is desirable it should be. Thus, the high and the low, the soft and the severe, which denote the different states of the passions, are also equally applicable to music. As the simple tones in music, such as the high, the low, the soft, the shrill, and the harsh, exactly correspond to single passions, such as the sublime, the languid, the melting, the exhilarating, or the boisterous, so the united action of the whole piece in union of simple sounds, or in a concert of music, is exactly characteristic of such a state of mind as the music is calculated to express in the performer, or excite in the hearer; and also entire and extensive harmony, in a piece of music, is expressive of perfect harmony in the state of the passions—and likewise, the leading characteristic of the music, is indicative of some governing affection of the mind, corresponding to the leading character and design of the music.—From the correspondence of the simple tones of music, with the simple passions, we may doubtless find as good a reason as can be given, why music is pleasing or displeasing at all—And this is confirmed by the fact, that different persons are pleased with different sounds and different airs. For tho' one may be delighted with the cheerful and lively, another with the languid and melancholy, yet all are disgusted with harshness and discords, and all are at once delighted with ease, harmony, and softness. And it will be found that these different persons are most pleased, with those airs which are most agreeable, in a philosophic sense, to their constitutions. Music, more than the other sciences, has an intimate connection with animal nature. From this doctrine we may give the reason why the ancient bards and musicians acquired such an influence over the passions of men. Thus David could drive madness from Saul, and change him for a moment into a rational and benevolent man. And this inseparable connection between music and the

passions, can never be dissolved, either by barbarism on the one hand, or refinement on the other. The influence of music may be the greatest over uncivilized men, who are most governed by their passions, notwithstanding, as refinement and humanity proceed, the mind will become more and more susceptible of the various expressions and delicacies of music. This gives the skilful musician an increasing power over the affections of his hearers. Thus, if he would call them to mirth, this must be the character of his music—if he would call them to mourning, his strain must be languid and melting—if he would excite them to the sublime, the music must soar with majesty and pathos. But the highest effect of music is, when all the powers of virtuous sensibility are excited, by a variety of corresponding musical expressions, so that at some capital point, the combined action of the whole piece, may be the greatest possible exertion of the performers, and the highest possible excitement of the hearers. In this connection between music and the passions God has greatly added to the pleasures of social life.

But we may trace this idea further ; by this connection we are rendered susceptible of moral impressions also—As the passions and affections are designed as well for social as religious life, so music is calculated to inspire us with benevolence, fear, or devotion, as well as with gaiety and friendship. / To every external impression, there is a corresponding sensation in human nature, and to every sentiment of religion, there is a coincident set of feelings in the human heart. / Thus music has in some men uniformly, and in most men at times, a power over the moral feelings—the general effect of music on the mind, is to soothe and harmonize the affections, and thus to prepare it for moral influence, and even for the reception of truth itself. Particularly on young and tender minds, nothing has a more happy influ-

ence; it prepares the way for attention—it softens the heart, and finds an avenue for the sentiments of philosophy, morals, or religion. But we may add to these remarks, in music accompanied by words, there is a double effect of whatever is intended. The language conveys the sentiment, and the sound reaches the affections, and the spirit and the understanding are of course united. Music has indeed been perverted—the charms of innocent nature have been tortured in the filthy songs of ribaldry, nonsense, and lust—and the beauty of the celestial inhabitant, the delight and employment of Angels, has been ravished and defiled in a degenerate world; but sacred music, in her purity and perfection can dwell only with Angels, and with those who are probationers, for the celestial raptures of seraphic song.

After these more general remarks, let us turn our attention,

3. To the sense and usefulness of music, as applied to divine praise. The great author of nature, who has so wisely adapted the faculties of man to his terrestrial habitation, has made the only means of human felicity, consistent with the rules of moral obligation. Music is no more capable of adding to the pleasures of animal and social life, than it is of aiding us in the duties of religion. The connection between music and the passions, admits of its being applied to the purposes of religious worship, to the highest advantage. Music has ever been esteemed part of divine service, and doubtless it is a very necessary and important part. In the Jewish church it was highly regarded, as applied to sacred hymns, composed for the worship of God. Moses was the first author of which we have any account, who wrote hymns for divine worship. All nations have followed his example, in the worship of their Gods. The composition of sacred hymns and songs was improved by succeeding Prophets; but sacred music was carried to its highest perfection under David.—David introduced many instruments, and reduced to

order this solemn part of worship. This practice continued in the Jewish church, till it was sanctioned by Christ and his Apostles, who themselves recommended it, both by example and precept. The hymn which our Saviour sung with his Disciples at the last supper is supposed to have consisted of the psalms contained between the hundred and thirteenth, and hundred and eighteenth inclusive. Music was not, in the Jewish church, a ceremonial, but a moral part of worship—thus it was considered by Christ—thus it was recommended by the Apostles, and in this sense it has ever been esteemed in the christian church. The poetic language of scripture, attended with music, is calculated for every purpose of devotion. As man is compounded of body and spirit, the design of music is to make both natures to harmonize together—that our spiritual deadness may be enlivened, by the warmth of animal feelings, and that our passions may be drawn under intellectual dominion, by the sentiment and devotion of celestial song. Music can inspire the social, tender and benevolent feelings—it can also call up a devotional frame of mind, with affections and sentiments suitable for the house of God—it can lay open the heart to the fairest impressions of sacred truth, and give us foretastes of the joys and raptures of the upper world—We have reason to lament the abuses of music—that it has been turned to the worship of pagan divinities, and perverted to the purposes of obscenity and licentiousness; but the same mourning may be applied to religion itself. The depravity of human nature is lamentable, in whatever light it is viewed.

Music has indeed been forced to the service of the libertine, the lecher, and the atheist—She has attended immolations and sacrifices, made to Gods fictitious, absurd, and unknown—she has sanctioned altars, stained with human blood; on which the fruit of the body has been offered for the sins of the soul, yet she is sacred. Music is natural to men, and may

be applied to the worst purposes, but the perfection of her charms, can dwell only with innocence and virtue. She may be applied to calm the joys, and soothe the sorrows of human life. She may be improved to enliven the social hour, or to sweeten the expressions of friendship, or to embalm the memory of the dead; but her highest prerogative is to join in the exercise of our religious feelings and affections, and to heighten the expressions of divine praise. ¶ Even a bad man, may be charmed into a kind of temporary virtue and devotion, by the influence of divine song. /

The greatness and goodness of God, in all his boundless displays of creation, providence, and grace, call for more than mere language can express—in view of these things the soul can only exult, and Gods praise must be shouted in hymns and anthems. Thus the Angels are frequently employed. When God exhibited this lower creation, the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.—God has formed the inferior creatures also, with organs of praise—the birds notice the times and seasons, and excite us to praise our maker; and do we discover less beauty in the rising morning, or in the opening spring? Shall man stand a silent spectator of those scenes, at which all creatures croke around him? To us, nature opens, with a thousand beauties, which the beasts, the fowls, and the fishes, cannot reach—to us are unfolded, the deeper treasures of wisdom and knowledge—to us the great sun of righteousness has arisen, with healing on his wings.

The low opinion which some entertain of music, is certainly inconsistent, both with the dictates of reason and revelation. Too little attention has been given to music, in religious worship, in most of our churches—in some places it has been almost wholly neglected; in others, it has been performed, in a trifling, improper, or unanimating manner. In all places, it is subject to languor and decay. We

have reason to lament that this is true ; because music, except the truths of salvation, is no less important than any other part of worship—it is no less sacred, no less devotional, and no less awful than prayer itself. From this we may conclude, that the neglect of music, in public worship, is not merely indecent, but sinful. Were men pure and sinless, as the heavenly inhabitants, devotion would be natural, and music would be praise—It would be much of our business, to chant the praises of the most high, in alleluias and anthems drawn from every object, and occasion, by which his perfections are displayed ; and every different air would call up some new divine sentiment, which would exalt, enliven, and moralize the mind.

Objections have existed against un sanctified singers ; but if singing psalms, is considered as a part of divine worship, the objection lies equally against all the duties of the sanctuary, as they respect the unconverted—if singing is considered as among the means of grace, the objection will lie against all the means of grace. But the objection is too futile to merit a formal answer—All the duties of religion have the same ultimate object, and require, as duties, the same temper of mind. Every part of divine service may be numbered with the means of grace—we are all under a dispensation of grace, and both the duties and institutions of religion, are directly and unitedly calculated to awaken in us a sense of piety, and to lead us to God, who is the fountain of moral perfection. It is the duty of all, who are able, to join in the music of divine service ; and parents ought, as far as consistent, to aid and support their children in this duty. Besides the duty it is a very great ornament to society ; it may assist both the manners and the morals. Nothing is more delightful in public worship than a good number of well arranged singers, who perform not only with decency, but so as to command the attention of the assembly—On the oth-

er hand nothing is more disgusting than a set of lifeless and discordant performers. Nor is any thing more indecent in public worship, than for the singers particularly, to stand, sit, or sing, in a lolling, frolicsome, or sleepy posture. We ought all, to remember, when we go into the sanctuary, that we are professedly in the presence of the great God—whatever we attempt in address to him, should be attended in the most solemn and fearful manner. This truth is equally applicable to music and all other parts of divine service. Further—the singing of psalms is highly calculated to awaken the singers. If their hearts can be affected, by any thing, they may with those awful and interesting truths which they pronounce, respecting the fall of man—his redemption by the only son of God—and the future glory of Christ's kingdom, issuing in the endless happiness of those who are finally saved—The same, may also apply to the rest of the assembly.

The words of well adapted psalms, with the corresponding solemnities of music, derive a double advantage from being sung, and fall with an aggravated weight on the mind. Expressive words touching the coincident affections, elevate the whole soul—the heart and the intellect are united—the divine object is seized—and heaven opens on our view. If from this glorious prospect the sinner may retire with disgust, the saint would leave it with reluctance, and would spend an eternity in the ravishing vision.

Perhaps we may now attend to the objections, which by some would be made against instrumental music. Those who object to the present established music, as used in the churches, may be divided into three classes—those who are opposed to all method in this part of worship—those who suppose none but members of the church ought to be singers—and those who deny the propriety of instrumental music. To the first of these we shall make no reply; the second we have already noticed; and with respect to the third, we ob-

serve—the force of their objection arises from the supposition that music is not a moral, but a ceremonial part of worship. If this supposition is removed perhaps the very ground of the objection will be taken away. For if music was a moral part of worship, the authority of the Jewish church, in the use of instruments, would be an argument equally sufficient for us all. That it was moral, and not ceremonial, we argue, both from its nature, and from its establishment. First, because it was not connected with the establishment of ceremonial service—Divine music, if not introduced, was certainly established and reduced to form by David, more than four hundred years after the Mosaic institution of typical service. And what corroborates the argument, is, that the beauty and life of Jewish music had declined with the spirit of religion, from the time of David, and failed with the other moral parts of worship, while only the ceremonial remained, at the time of our Saviour. But,

Secondly, Music is a moral part of worship, because, clearly, it is the expression of divine praise, and thus, is no less solemn and devotional than prayer.—As such it connects itself with the very existence of social worship. If this is true of singing, it must be true of the use of instruments also—Because,

Thirdly, There can be no difference in the nature of music considered with respect to its cause, effects, or moral tendency, whether it is made by the voice, or by an instrument. For the organs of the voice compose a real instrument, an instrument which makes its sound by means of air, as much as a viol, organ—its effect is produced thro' the medium of the ear—and its moral tendency is drawn from its correspondence to certain passions or affections of the mind. If the cause of all music is the same—if the nature of it is the same, with respect to the principles on which it rests—if its effects are of the same nature on the mind—and if the moral influence of it arises from its connection with the passions, surely

there can be no foundation for a moral distinction between vocal and instrumental music. No effect can be produced, or any end answered by one, which cannot be answered by the other, in nearly an equal degree, except an expression of the ideas by words; and this exception cannot be made, where vocal and instrumental music are united. If what we have said be true, vocal and instrumental are equally moral—they were moral in the Jewish church—and as they were united by David who carried sacred music to its highest perfection, for the times in which he lived; and as divine song was sanctioned by Christ and his Apostles, we have a sufficient argument for the use of instruments in christian worship. We may add, vocal and instrumental music, both concur in the same moral design—no essential objection can lie against one, which will not lie against the other. If one was ceremonial, they were both ceremonial, and ought to have fallen together, with the Temple—if one is moral, they are both moral; they were always moral, and ought to be admitted into christian worship as a moral, and most solemn and interesting part of service. It is an error, into which have fallen, not the Quakers only, but many others, to consider the Jews as having scarcely any thing moral in their worship—as if they were a different set of beings; or had a different religion from us. This is separating between the ancient and christian churches, in a manner equally unwarranted by reason and scripture.

Finally, music is one of the most beautiful and interesting parts of divine service—it adds a grace and comeliness to the Temple of Jehovah—by it all true christians are much assisted in piety and devotion—it gives a foretaste of those seraphic airs, which we fancy are heard by Saints, when they are entering the gates of paradise—it calls up in the christian the strongest resemblance of what he will be in heaven—it leads to those objects which should always be embraced in divine worship, and awakens those emotions

which a christian should feel when he is uttering the praises of redeeming love.

On the speaker music has the most happy and indescribable influence. If his heart is warmed with the love of God, he derives a double advantage; but he who receives no assistance, is capable neither of oratory, nor affection. By music the speaker is charmed into a proper temper of mind to lead others in devotion—his feelings are animated—his soul is harmonized, and the impression which he receives himself, is returned to the highest advantage upon his audience. On this occasion, we cannot neglect to acknowledge our grateful respects, to those, who have so far concurred in the original and moral designs of nature, as they have contributed to improve divine praise. To you sir, the leader of the day; and to you also my friends, we owe our acknowledgements for the entertainment of this occasion. May the Lord teach you the most solemn and profitable manner of singing his praise. Learn to sing with the spirit and the understanding united; and may you all, by these earthly endeavors, be fitted in due time, to join the more perfect harmony of the heavenly world.

In a word—the connection which exists between music and the sentiments of the heart, lays a foundation for the highest moral advantage, in our present state of corporeal existence. As all our religion supposes a mixture of bodily and mental exercise, there is nothing, which more than music, can engage the whole soul, and call up every power into divine service. This ranks music among the means of grace, and renders it an essential part of public worship. Further—our worship is designed to be social—between the social and animal feelings, there is an inseparable connection—as the animal are excited, the social are drawn into exercise, and thus a multitude of hearts can beat in unison, and a whole assembly imbibe nearly the same sentiments and feelings. / Again, the

influence of truth itself on the mind does not commonly come from retaining the very words, and propositions, as delivered by the speaker ; but from the weight of sentiment conveyed, and the general impression which remains. This affords an additional argument for the usefulness of music, derived from its general influence on the mind. Music in sacred use is one of the highest expressions of divine praise, and as such stands in the first rank of religious duties. To this we are earnestly and particularly exhorted by the Apostle. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. From this direction, we may be exhorted to apply divine songs to family worship, so that our houses may become vocal with the praises of God. But the greatest use of sacred music, will ever be in the house of the Lord—here the mind is prepared for the solemnity of the highest devotion—from this purpose let it never be diverted. Let us always wait on the Lord with a due sense of his glory. Let us enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise. To conclude—if we love God, we are probationers for a more noble state, where our faculties will be perfect, and our music unceasing. My christian brethren ! When we enter on an endless existence, our happiness will be love, and our religion will be praise. In the new Jerusalem we shall sing a new song—we shall join the seraphic choirs of Angels in the songs and visions of heaven, and redemption will be our endless theme.

Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be endless praises—AMEN.

